



## FAIR POLITICAL PRACTICES COMMISSION

P.O. Box 807 • 428 J Street • Sacramento, CA 95812-0807

(916) 322-5660 • Fax (916) 322-0886

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Commissioners Deaver and Scott  
**From:** Commissioner Makel and Chairman Getman  
**Date:** September 7, 1999  
**Re:** Policy and Planning Objectives for 1999-2000

After consultation with staff, we propose that the Commission adopt the following policy and planning objectives to serve as a guide for Commission activities in the upcoming year.

#### I. Our Goal for the Year

Our goal for the next year should be to improve the usefulness of the FPPC to the public through simplification, education and outreach. This is neither a disapproval of the past, nor a dismissal of problems as being merely those of perception. Rather, it is a commitment to take an honest, in-depth look at those areas where we could use improvement, and make improvement a priority; to expand the topics on which and the methods by which we communicate; to ensure that our disclosure requirements are complied with; and to begin looking toward the future, especially at how we--like the candidates we regulate--can use new technologies to increase our ability to communicate in a cost-effective manner. In short, we propose to re-focus our priorities -- budgetary, fiscal and personnel -- on **simplification, education and outreach**.

#### II. Translating Our Goal Into Action

##### A. Simplification

Our primary focus here will be on the forms simplification project, and especially those areas that require legislative action. This will be the cornerstone of our legislative program.

As a corollary, we propose scaling back other legislative activity. Since its inception, the PRA



has been amended some 200 times. No one can be expected to accurately hit a constantly moving target. For the coming year, we will limit our legislative proposals to only those that greatly further our goal of simplification, correct potential Constitutional errors, or otherwise meet a heightened threshold of need. We will encourage the Legislature to do the same.

We will scale back our seemingly constant regulatory changes, applying here too a heightened standard of need before proposing a regulatory change. Our primary regulatory focus will be on the Conflict of Interest Simplification and Improvement project.

We will review and revise as necessary our informational materials to make them more user-friendly. By the end of this year, we expect to have completed a major overhaul of our campaign information manuals for candidates, ballot measure committees, and major donors.

We also will look at streamlining our own procedures. We hope to present proposals on a better regulatory adoption process; on a clear timeline and easier method for submission of documents to be considered at Commission meetings; and on clear procedures for legal practice before the FPPC.

#### B. Education

As our legislative and regulatory changes decrease, our efforts to enhance education and outreach will increase. Our education efforts will focus on a number of areas:

We will strive to provide better information to candidates, committees and local officials, especially those holding office for the first time, on how to comply with the PRA. We will publicize the most common mistakes, and how to avoid them. We will begin the process of producing and distributing to all new candidates and committees pamphlets explaining the basics of reporting; develop better ways of explaining how to fill out the Statement of Economic Interest (SEI), perhaps through an interactive Internet or cd-rom version; increase our efforts to explain the conflict of interest rules to those most directly affected by them; and research ways of extending our seminar program throughout the state, again through the Internet or other new technologies.

We will make the information we collect accessible to the public. We will explore ways to expand electronic filing to local candidates; to SEI's; to smaller campaigns. We will publish an annual report. We will work with the Secretary of State, the California Voter Foundation and others to identify information and links that we should provide through our website. We will make the FPPC more accessible to the news media and to interested parties. We will educate voters on how to get campaign finance information. We will develop better ways of providing the public with information about their local officials' potentially disqualifying economic interests.

We will do a better job of explaining our enforcement program. We will develop, at public

meetings, an outline of our enforcement priorities. We will explain to the public and to governing officials the manner by which we accept cases for investigation, our methods of investigation, and our criteria for bringing or closing a case. We will make enforcement staff more accessible to the press and public, within the necessary limitations of confidentiality in ongoing investigations. We will review, and if necessary modify, our positions on Public Records Act requests, providing public information regarding ongoing investigations, and responding to press inquiries.

We will ask the Legislature and the Governor for funding to develop a Public Education Unit that will be responsible for reviewing and improving all our publications, developing new educational methods, and updating and expanding our website. That Unit will become the central repository for the many local campaign finance and conflict of interest codes applicable to public officials in this state. We will work toward a goal of having the Unit's informational resources available on-line and accessible statewide.

### C. Outreach

We will continue to expand our efforts to improve the manner and timeliness with which we provide the public and media with Commission meeting materials. We will explore ways to increase public participation and interest in Commission meetings.

Staff and Commissioners will make greater efforts to meet with persons throughout the state, by increasing our participation in seminars, speeches, panels and conferences, editorial board meetings and media interviews. Commission members and staff with special expertise will write articles, editorials and opinion pieces, as appropriate, to explain FPPC policies and the rules of campaign finance.

We will continue to expand our efforts to publicize what we do; the actions we take at meetings, the informational seminars we give, the enforcement programs we develop and other agency activities. We will increase use of news releases and advisories about commission actions and programs.

We will research methods of using technology to reach those portions of the regulated community with whom we do not now come in regular contact. We will explore such things as expanded use of Internet seminars, and CD-rom interactive training materials.

We have begun to develop and maintain a data base of groups interested in our programs. We will contact these groups when we have new programs that might be of interest; and work with them to build coalitions where appropriate.

We will meet on a regular basis with other government agencies, state and local, that have PRA-related duties. We will continue and expand our work with the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws to learn what we can from other state ethics and campaign agencies.